

SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY OF THE THREE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL ZONING ARTICLES 9, 10 & 11 (GROUPED BY DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES)-- BEDFORD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2016

Bedford's Industrial zoning bylaws are decades old and increasingly obsolete in a variety of ways. The supply of undeveloped industrial land is all but gone, and industrial/office/corporate buildings and groupings of buildings, as well as the sites themselves, are aging and in need of redevelopment and improvement. To create a regulatory environment that is receptive to such issues, the zoning laws are proposed to be extensively updated and amended to establish a framework that is reflective of the 21st century, rather than that of the middle of the last century. The first critical step following completion of the town's Comprehensive Plan ("The Bedford We Want") in 2014, was passage of a completely new Industrial Mixed Use special permit bylaw, at special town meeting in November of that year, to encourage desirable concentrations of modern industrial activity. The present bylaws are often out of date in terms of allowed uses and full of definitional inconsistencies and voids. They contain various dimensional and quantitative development standards that are illogical, and they are sometimes unclear both in terms of allowed uses and regulatory process. There are numerous instances where they are simply unclear or inconsistent with related provisions. This package of three closely-related articles seeks to address these issues by means of this extensive set of amendments.

The individual modifications range from minor technical corrections (such as erroneously labelled district names or tabular column headings) to more significant changes such as prudent, limited increases in maximum floor area and height in the most appropriate areas, or rezoning of certain parcels to a more appropriate zoning classification. In all instances, the proposed changes have been based on land use studies and case studies conducted by the Planning Department during the summers of 2014 and 2015, which provided a data base on which determinations could be rationally based. What follows is a summary of all of the individual amendments in the three articles, organized into nine descriptive, functional categories, to quickly enhance the reader's understanding of this major economic development initiative.

UPDATED/NEW DEFINITIONS OR USES

Add workable, modern definition of Hotel.

Add a new category Specialized Institutional Uses to reflect particular uses not now in bylaw.

Add workable, modern definition of Restaurant.

Replace existing Research Facility definition with the more updated one shown further on (Information Technology, Life and Materials Science and Engineering) and move from Business to Industrial uses.

Create advanced new definition/land use category entitled Information Technology, Life and Materials Science and Engineering.

Amend Light Manufacturing to add newer land uses relevant to today's economy.

Add Health Care category as a prominent use not presently in bylaw, to Industrial Use Classifications and to Table I.

Clarify definition to indicate that residential is no longer part of Industrial Mixed Use special permits.

In Section 15, Industrial Mixed Use special permit, replace existing Information Technology and Life Sciences use classification with the modified use classification Information Technology, Life and Materials Science and Engineering.

Allow Home Occupations in residences in the Commercial (Depot) district, where they are presently prohibited; this is a minor district expansion of allowed uses.

LIMITED HEIGHT AND/OR FLOOR AREA EXPANSION

In Industrial B district, allow prudent expansion by means of an increase in height to 56' or 4 stories, from 42' with 3 stories, and amend accordingly in Table II.

In Industrial C district, allow prudent expansion by means of an increase in height to 56' or 4 stories, from 45' (without any story maximum in present bylaw), amending accordingly in Table II.

In Industrial B, increase maximum floor area ratio (FAR) from a low .25 to a more reasonable .40.

In Industrial C, increase maximum floor area ratio (FAR) from present .35 to a slightly higher .40.

ADJUSTMENT TO MORE REALISTIC SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

In Industrial B district, adjust minimum Side and Rear yards abutting a residential district from 100 to 75 feet, while enforcing strong screening/landscaping standards already in the bylaw.

In Industrial A, B and C districts, adjust minimum lot landscaping percentage from 50% (almost never complied with on Bedford's relatively small industrial lots) to a more reasonable 25%, amending accordingly in Table II.

In Industrial A, change minimum Frontage from 50' to 150' to make this dimension more logical in terms of its minimum lot size.

In Industrial A, change the minimum Lot Width from 50' to 100', to make this dimension more logical in terms of its minimum lot size.

In Industrial A, adjust minimum Side and Rear yards abutting a residential district from 150 to 100 feet, while enforcing strong screening/landscaping standards already in the bylaw.

In Industrial C, adjust minimum Side and Rear yards abutting a residential district from 150 to 100 feet, while enforcing strong screening/landscaping standards already in the bylaw.

DIMENSIONAL ADJUSTMENTS FOR IMPROVED VIABILITY OR CONSISTENCY

In Industrial B, change Minimum Lot Area from the present 60,000 square feet to 2 acres, due to almost every property already containing well over the proposed 2 acres, and to 60,000 SF being an unrealistically small area in to accommodate viable office/industrial buildings and all required site elements.

In Industrial B, change Minimum Lot Frontage from 90 feet to 125 feet, which is a more logical dimension with an upwardly-adjusted minimum lot area of 2 acres.

In Industrial B, change Minimum Front Yard from 35 feet to 60 feet, wherein all existing front setbacks are already substantially over 60'.

In Industrial B, change Minimum Lot Width from 50 feet to 75 feet, which will avoid irregular or overly narrow lots in light of the upwardly-adjusted IND B lot area of 2 acres and the minimum frontage of 125 feet.

In Industrial C, change Minimum Lot Area from 4 acres to 5 acres, due to almost every property already containing well over the present 4 acres and to the existence of a high percentage of industrial/office campuses in this district, in which the Industrial Mixed Use zoning seeks to promote redevelopment of aging properties.

In Industrial C, change Minimum Lot Frontage from 50 feet to 150 feet, due to a 50 foot minimum already being too narrow, and to the proposed 150 feet being in keeping with the proposed 5 acre minimum lot area.

Change maximum lot coverage percentage in Commercial district from 25% to 30%, to reflect what is built on the ground, changing accordingly in Table II.

NEW QUALITATIVE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Establish for the first time a general set of development/redevelopment guidelines in all Industrial districts, both to protect the community and to reflect the standards of the private market for site amenities and features.

CHANGING OF DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS (REZONING EXISTING BASE DISTRICTS)

Rezone 3 parcels along northern part of Middlesex Turnpike to newly-revsied Industrial B, where their present designations are General Business and/or (proposed) Industrial A, in order to create a more unified and logical pattern of land use in a location where growth can be best accommodated.

REGULATORY CLARITY

Create a new permit category necessary for the 2014 Industrial Mixed Use bylaw, SPM.

Clarify the districts or permits under which mixed residential and business are allowed.

Clarify that Hotels are allowed in IND districts only as part of an Industrial Mixed Use special permit.

Clarify that Restaurants are allowed in IND districts only as part of an Industrial Mixed Use special permit.

Clarify that Banks are allowed in IND districts only as part of an Industrial Mixed Use special permit.

Make structural changes to Use Table to correct column alignment errors.

Clarify all of the districts in which Home Occupations may be established.

REMOVING UNNECESSARY PROVISIONS OR USES

Remove unrealistic 750 square foot limit on mixed use residential floor area, as well as unnecessary references to other regulatory jurisdictions.

Eliminate Heavy Vehicular Dealership and Repair Garage as an allowed use (any such existing business will be grandfathered for as long as they operate), in Use Classifications and in Table I.

Eliminate Motel in favor of Hotel classification.

CLARITY/CONSISTENCY

Label 3 Industrial districts accurately and alphabetically and eliminate (Industrial) “Park” from Definitions and in Tables I and II.

Label 3 Industrial districts accurately and alphabetically and eliminate (Industrial) “Park” from Table I, Allowed Uses.

Clarify that a Hotel is the only Residential use allowed in an Industrial Mixed Use special permit.

Amend existing Section 15 Industrial Mixed Use and Table I (allowed uses) to incorporate definition of new SPM—special permit for Industrial Mixed Use.

Add stories to the column heading for maximum height in Table II.

Amend Table II to express floor-to-area ratio (FAR) maxima as a ratio decimal, rather than a percentage.

Amend Table II to clarify that some lot area minima are in square feet and some are in acres.